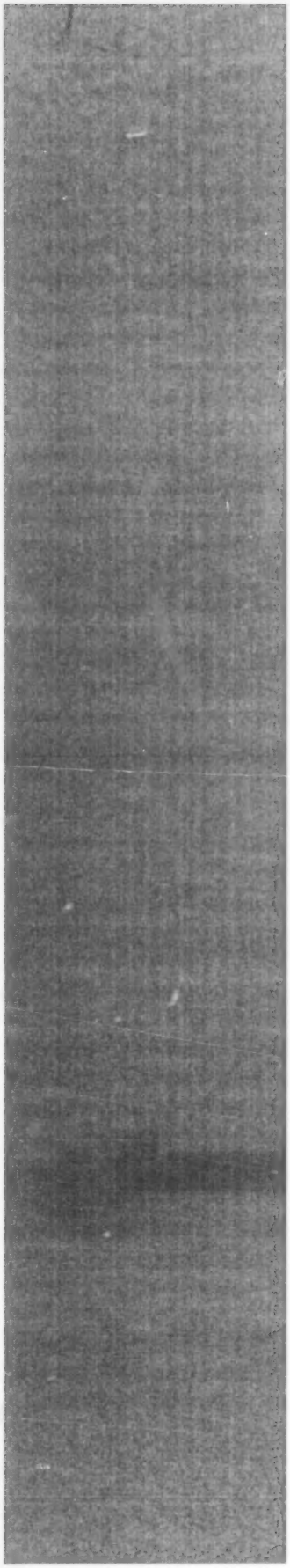

Building Better Cities:

Regional Cooperation in Western Canada

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INTRODUCTION

In Canada and around the globe, urban areas are experiencing rapid growth, and cities often find themselves economically, socially and physically intertwined with neighboring cities, towns and rural areas. The resulting "city-regions" are important nodes of social and economic activity, and the component municipalities share numerous interests. The challenge is to find appropriate arrangements to address these mutual interests while continuing to meet local needs. How can all of the governments that make up a city-region work together so that the whole system functions efficiently and responsively as a region?

Regional cooperation options are an important topic in the current policy debate, particularly when placed against the larger issue of the strategic positioning of western Canadian cities. Thus, it is not surprising that finding appropriate regional arrangements is an active topic in many western Canadian cities. Given that regional interdependencies will only grow in the future, continued efforts should be taken to improve the knowledge base of policymakers and citizens to help them make the best choices for their communities. This study employs comparative and qualitative research to contribute to this knowledge base by examining both regional governance options and regional government structures.

WHY REGIONAL COOPERATION?

There are two large, overriding reasons why it makes sense for individual municipalities within a city-region to cooperate. The first is that the municipalities in a city-region share numerous common interests and challenges that could be addressed more efficiently and effectively through cooperation. For example, regional cooperation can be effective for managing the many common problems and opportunities arising from large and expanding urban areas; these include business opportunities and economic development, growth management, flows of traffic, water supply and pollution (Gottmann, 1995). Regional solutions are also proposed in order to ensure the economic and social health of a city-region, since all parts of the system must be involved. The second reason to consider regional cooperation is the fact that one municipality's actions can have impacts for other municipalities within the city-region. Regional effects do not recognize political or municipal boundaries.

More specific rationales for regional cooperation include:

Economic competitiveness. In today's global economy it is city-regions – not cities or individual municipalities – that are the units of economic competition. As many have argued, only city-regions have the necessary scale and diversity to compete in the global marketplace (Hershberg, 1995; Ohmae, 1995; Peirce, Johnson and Hall, 1993), and city-regions are the geographic units in which our goods and services are created (Hershberg, 1995). Within a competitive global environment, regional cooperation, coordination and marketing may be necessary to maintain a competitive advantage over other city-regions (Bourne, 1999).

Fiscal pressures. Decreased revenues combined with increased municipal costs have created the perception that the efficiency of local government needs to be improved. It is assumed that efficiency can be improved by either downsizing government or by outsourcing through alternative service delivery or production arrangements (Bourne, 1999). Regional cooperation can alleviate fiscal pressures by allowing for alternative service provision arrangements.

Urban management. Due to urban growth, today's city-regions are large, physically dispersed and have extremely complex internal governance structures. This has created both urban management problems and the trend toward solutions centered on regional coordination.

Simply put, in order to address mutual interests, municipalities within larger city-regions should find opportunities for cooperation on a regional level. The question then becomes: How do municipalities foster regional co-operation in order to address common problems and opportunities?

REGIONAL COORDINATION: THE KEY DEBATE

Although few debate the need for regional cooperation and coordination, there are numerous ways that it can be achieved, and debate about the mechanisms can be fierce and controversial. There are three overarching approaches to metropolitan political organization that need to be highlighted: 1) the public choice approach, in which individual municipal governments retain their autonomy and authority; 2) traditional consolidation approaches (the metropolitan model), which advocate relatively strong metro-wide regional governments, mergers and amalgamations; and 3) new regionalist approaches, which support independent municipalities overlain by a variety of regional institutions and governance options that suit the specific needs and diversity of the city-region. It should be stressed that these overarching schools of thought are not debates about distinct government options. Within each perspective, there is a range of approaches to the organization of local government. These local government options will be outlined in the following section.

Public Choice Approach

Many city-regions in North America are divided into numerous local government units, without an overarching formal governing body for the city-region as a whole. Proponents of public choice contend that each local area requires its own government structure, responsibility for service delivery should be local, and local autonomy and complex governance arrangements are needed (Sancton, 1994; Sancton, 2000a). The first basic argument follows the principles of local democracy – that having many local governments is more democratic because they are closer to the people. A second line of argument is based on the economic theory of public goods and classic economics (Tiebout, 1956) and on theories of the operation of polycentric systems (e.g., markets, federal systems) (Bish, 2001).[1] This argument states, "the best structure is to have a large number of small local governments so that the diverse preferences of many different citizens can be satisfactorily accommodated" (Tindal and Tindal, 2000: 20).

The public choice approach asserts that local governance is increasingly complex and that local government must vary by scale and by function (health, education, municipal services) to provide for citizens' wishes. As well, optimal efficiency in production of services is achieved through the use of different sized organizations (Bish, 2001). This approach also takes into account variety in tax levels and living conditions, and thus creates more choice for residents.

In effect, a fragmented structure is a "quasi-market" where "competition [for local residents] between local governments takes place" (Sharpe, 1995: 14). In this approach, inter-municipal competition encourages greater efficiency, especially if special-purpose governments and other complex forms of service delivery are established to accommodate diverse resident preferences in amounts that people choose. A public choice approach is a "bottom-up" or evolutionary approach that begins with citizens and proceeds to create additional institutional arrangements. This approach is committed to processes that accept voluntary cooperation and mutually acceptable agreements, and does not support processes that are imposed by higher levels of government. Regional cooperation can be achieved without creating new government structures and can be produced through a variety of informal voluntary arrangements including special purpose bodies, mutual aid agreements, contracting for services, joint training arrangements, and the use of volunteer organizations.

Traditional Consolidation Approach

Proponents of greater consolidation view the metropolis as a single community that would function more efficiently if it operated as one large system of government. Proposed methods for consolidation typically include large-scale mergers, annexations, and amalgamations. In the 1960s and 1970s, consolidation advocates sought a government-centered approach to urban problems and viewed small municipal government structures as out of touch and inefficient: bigger was perceived as better. It was thought that a single comprehensive organization would be better able to provide public goods and services efficiently and cost-effectively. Some municipal amalgamations in Europe and Canada did reduce the number of municipal governments. This did not occur in the United States due to municipal protection against imposed changes to their local government structure. As a result, amalgamations can only be found in a few isolated cases that were approved through local referendum (Sancton, 2000b).

Proponents contend that fragmented structures lead to inefficiencies because small local governments cannot achieve economies of scale in service provision. They argue that these inefficiencies are compounded because fragmentation creates an array of different standards and regulations for development, fashioning an uneven urban landscape. More importantly, fragmentation is fundamentally unequal – wealthier municipalities will have better services and lower taxes. This, in turn, creates higher degrees of social polarization (Bourne, 1999). Consolidation proponents argue that a larger consolidated municipal structure resolves the problems of the fragmented (public choice) model and better represents the region. They argue that consolidation enables services to be standardized to one level. In theory, it is also more efficient since it would narrow disparities in service levels, ensure more uniform standards of infrastructure and public facilities, clarify service provision, and achieve economies of scale. Proponents also believe that consolidation facilitates economic growth and results in better planning.

New Regionalist Approach

This approach looks at cities in their full regional context; advocates view regional cooperation and regional development as vitally important to the future of metropolitan areas.[2] Most advocates of the regional approach do not accept all of the assumptions and values of the public choice approach, but neither do they accept that larger local governments are more efficient (Sancton, 2000b). Instead they contend that the use of alternative delivery mechanisms and a variety of regional institutional governance arrangements will create a system where cities can compete in a competitive global environment. One of their main contributions is recognizing the role of non-governmental regional organizations (from the private and non-profit sectors) in creating a regional vision, and as a vehicle to advance regional cooperation. Unlike public choice advocates who favour arrangements that emerge strictly from voluntary efforts, new regionalists are less clear regarding process and hint at the possible need for building regional institutions rather than completely relying on bottom-up voluntary arrangements (Wight, 1998). Although a few advocates argue for consolidation of municipal boundaries and government structures (e.g., Rusk, 1995), they are in the minority. Most "new regionalists" propose no changes to municipal boundaries. Comprehensive regional governance proposals form the essence of this new way of thinking. The core philosophy implied in this approach is that a true regional focus can be achieved if local policymakers and citizens are prepared to give up some local control, become less captivated with the notion of receiving their fair share and have a more encompassing notion of the larger community.

Bish (2001) states that local governance and governments need to be supplemented by larger-scale institutional arrangements that can facilitate cooperation among smaller governments and undertake activities that smaller governments cannot handle efficiently. Strategies include revenue sharing, regional planning and public-private partnerships to create a multiplicity of regional cooperative arrangements without changing the structure

or boundaries of municipal government. Sancton (2000b) states that most Canadian city-regions already have in place many of the cooperative arrangements and institutions that American scholars advocate.

Testing the Theories: Empirical Evidence

Most of the empirical studies of local government organization and regional cooperation are concerned with the cost of particular government and governance arrangements, and the cost and efficiency of local government service provision and production. Bish (2001) and Sancton (2000b) provide comprehensive overviews on the advantages and disadvantages of local government amalgamations, and readers interested in the empirical research base should consult these important sources. Unless otherwise noted, the following evidence is found in their work:

Service diversity. Public choice theorists argue local governments should offer different kinds and levels of service so that potential residents and businesses can choose among several local governments (Tiebout, 1956). Research confirms that potential residents value service diversity: consumer surveys have shown that potential residents take local government services and taxes into account. Service diversity is created when small local government units are supported by both small and large-scale organizations.

Citizen representation. Research supports the public choice view that citizens have greater representation and greater influence in a system of smaller local governments. Studies of the effectiveness of citizen representation processes (e.g., public meetings, voter turnout in elections, direct contact with officials) find that they are more effective in smaller governments (Smith and Stewart, 1998).

Fiscal equivalence. Fiscal equivalence occurs when citizens who benefit from expenditure are those who pay its costs and therefore have an incentive to choose an efficient level of service. Research has found that small local governments have a higher degree of fiscal equivalence and that larger municipalities may achieve it by creating "special benefiting areas" that are taxed separately for a specific service.

Cost of elected officials. The argument is often made that consolidation will lower costs because there will be fewer elected officials. Of the few studies that have been made, the costs of elected officials in amalgamated and fragmented systems are often virtually identical (Bish, 2000). Overall, governance costs are a trivial portion of the overall cost of local governments.

Cost of local government services. The most important costs for local governments are those associated with the provision and production of services. After an extensive review of scholarly research since 1960, Bish (2001) states that the initial assumption that smaller and more numerous local governments provide services at a higher cost is simply wrong. Sancton (1996) cites several studies that larger consolidated municipal governments spend more money per capita than smaller ones. Tindal and Tindal (2000) conclude that the bulk of evidence suggests that cost savings are not achieved though consolidation. This conclusion was largely reached in the United States in the 1970s when it was determined that large scale amalgamations actually cost more. Other studies reveal no evidence that large municipalities have lower costs and are better able to meet local preferences (Bish, 2000).

Economies of scale. Attempts have been made to determine which local government activities possess economies of scale. Generally, overall savings are achieved if different organizations are used to produce different activities (Bish, 2000). Since the optimum size of government may be different for one service than for another, having many smaller local governments does not always make a difference regarding economies of scale (Kitchen, 1995). Ostrom, Bish and Ostrom (1988) found that few economies of scale are related to labour-intensive services such as policing. Researchers have concluded that approximately 80% of local government

activities do not possess economies of scale beyond the capabilities of small municipal governments.

Competition in production. Studies have found that private producers are less expensive than public producers when both public and private producers compete to deliver the same services. McDavid and Laliberte (1999) also found that there is no significant difference in cost for newer services such as recycling programs. However, the conclusion drawn is that over time public service providers lack the same incentives as private contractors to improve efficiency. A competitive environment encourages better and more efficient production of services.

Competition among municipalities. Competition among local governments is directly related to lower local expenditures. A city-region containing small and medium sized municipalities that not only compete, but also cooperate to deliver services that can offer economies of scale, are the least expensive local governments.

Economic growth. Although advocates of consolidation argue that amalgamations can enhance economic growth because larger local governments are better able to plan for the entire region, there has not been any evidence that establishes a relationship between the structure of local government and economic growth.

In terms of the three approaches to local government arrangements, it is widely agreed that the traditional consolidation approach has few merits. A plethora of research in the United States and internationally has found that larger local government structures (resulting from amalgamations) do not result in increased efficiencies, do not always provide services equally, do not correlate to economic growth, nor automatically solve regional problems.

It is striking to note that Canadian public policy debates appear largely uninformed by the decades of research on regional coordination. In Canada, the trend toward regional cooperation is often simplified to a debate focused on the structure of local government: consolidation versus fragmentation. Despite significant evidence that consolidation approaches are not effective, in the 1990s several large-scale amalgamations were undertaken in Canadian metropolitan regions (e.g., Halifax, Toronto, Ottawa-Carleton, Hamilton-Wentworth). It is apparent that a gap exists between those who advocate structural changes to local governments to solve efficiency woes and academics who have demonstrated that consolidation fails to meet these expectations.

MODELS FOR REGIONAL COOPERATION

There are numerous models for regional cooperation. Some of the options call for structural changes to local governments while other models present options that are related only to governance. It should be stressed that the various options for increasing regional cooperation among municipalities are not mutually exclusive. Furthermore, the options presented can be either provincially directed (top-down) or locally directed (bottom-up).

Multiple Single-tier Municipal Governments

In this case of multiple single-tier governments, a large metropolitan area is divided into numerous autonomous local government units or municipalities that cover the entire city-region. Historically, they may have been small towns separated by rural areas; however, over time urban growth caused annexations and subsequently urban municipal boundaries butt up against each other. Most cities in the United States have this fragmented form of local government. The City of Edmonton and its neighbouring municipalities are considered a Canadian example of multiple single-tier governments. However, by American standards Edmonton would not be considered fragmented. There is a continuum of fragmentation and this point is illustrated by comparing

Edmonton to Denver, Colorado. The city-region of Denver (population 2.3 million) is comprised of 50 different jurisdictions, and the City of Denver only contains 21% of the total population. Comparatively, Edmonton's city-region (population 0.9 million) is comprised of 21 municipalities, but the City of Edmonton contains over 70% of the region's population. Although both are examples of fragmented local government systems, the Edmonton metropolitan area would be considered very consolidated by American standards.

Multiple Single-tier Advantages:

- Exhibits principles of local democracy: representation, autonomy and legitimacy
- Municipalities "compete" for residents via services and tax rates (efficient economic base)
- Cooperation via inter-municipal agreements
- Inter-municipal conflict can be reduced because each municipality has autonomy for all decisions within its own boundaries
- Flexible, accountable service provision

Multiple Single-tier Disadvantages:

- Inefficient and ineffective regional planning and coordination (Bish, 1999)
- Inefficiencies and differing standards in service provision
- Inflexibility with inter-municipal agreements
- Inter-municipal conflict can increase due to proposed municipal boundary changes and annexations of territory

Single-tier Municipal Government

A single-tier system of local government is the simplest form of municipal government – a single unified government serving an entire urban area and possibly the immediate hinterland (Sancton, 1994). There are two ways that this form of local government can be achieved in a city-region: through the process of incremental annexations (a city's boundaries are extended outward at the same pace as urbanization), or through massive structural amalgamation of existing municipalities to create a new, larger one (Sancton, 1994). Calgary is an example of a single-tier model that has been achieved through numerous annexations; Winnipeg's Unicity, Ottawa-Carleton, Halifax and Hamilton-Wentworth are all examples of a single-tier model achieved through amalgamation.

When amalgamations occur, they are typically imposed upon city-regions by provincial governments that continue to believe the assumptions of the traditional school despite ample research evidence to the contrary. Local controversies and debates have been created when municipal amalgamation is imposed. For example, provincially imposed amalgamations in Toronto (1998) and Montreal (2000) elicited public protests, opposition and fierce debate. Given the controversial public nature of amalgamation and the research refuting its purported merits, it is surprising that provincial governments continue to impose this model on city-regions.

Single-tier Advantages:

- May lower costs and improve efficiency in selected areas where/if economies of scale exist
- Equal services for all citizens as services are raised to same standard
- Ease of governing city-region

Single-tier Disadvantages:

- No evidence of improved efficiency and lower costs in most service areas (Bish, 1999, 2001)
- Bringing services up to a standard (better) level typically results in higher costs
- Government less accessible to citizens (Bish, 1999); lack of citizen representation

Two-tier Municipal Government

The two-tier municipal model is comprised of two overlapping levels of elected local government: one smaller level (lower-tier individual municipalities) and one larger, area-wide level (upper-tier regional government). The upper-tier government is typically responsible for specified area-wide functions or concerns that are common to the whole region (e.g., regional planning, major roads, water supply) for which the lower-tier municipalities are considered too small to adequately provide.

This system of governance was first proposed in Canada in the 1950s as an alternative to amalgamation. Canada developed a reputation for its two-tier systems of local government, beginning with the Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto in 1953. Ontario and Quebec had two-tier systems covering most of their territory, but recent restructuring changes have virtually eliminated this type of local government. (Although British Columbia has a two-tier system, it is distinctly one of governance rather than government and will be discussed separately.)

According to Bish (1999), this two-tier model of government is not considered a successful or stable system. This system is one of the most controversial structural models and is not viewed favorably by local government scholars.

Two-tier Advantages:

- Allows for both regional and local governance
- More equality due to shared resources

Two-tier Disadvantages:

- Inefficient and expensive
- Overlapping responsibilities create conflict and increase bureaucracy
- Accountability is unclear; citizens feel over-governed
- Competition between the tiers

Regional Governance Arrangements

Governance is about making and enforcing rules on an area-wide basis. Regional governance can work in two ways: governance for the entire region for all types of regional services or governance of a specific service for the entire region. The main types of options are presented below, although there can be a great deal of variation within each type.

All Services Options

Association, Council or Board. One way that regional governance can be achieved is through an association, council, or board made up of representatives from member municipalities for a broad spectrum of regional functions. This governance model provides a formal decision mechanism through which the region can act with a single voice. Regional boards, councils or associations usually do not affect the specific functions of individual municipalities, but they can make decisions that are binding on their municipal members. While there are many different variations on this governance model, two key features common to all are that representatives at the regional level are appointed and the regional board does not have the power to levy taxes.

> *One Example – Regional Districts.* One of the best-known examples of this model is British Columbia's regional district system, which includes the Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD). In this system, the regional district is a governance structure to coordinate service delivery for the region. The primary roles of the district are to provide government in rural areas, act as a forum for inter-municipal cooperation and provide regional governance. Local residents through referenda decide changes to municipal boundaries, and municipalities pay their share of the costs of a particular service. In the case of services provided to unincorporated areas, a requisition is sent to the province that then collects property taxes from residents. The regional district is meant to be a flexible institution designed to assist municipalities to think and act collaboratively and regionally.

Regional District Advantages:

- Flexible and adaptable
- Municipalities retain autonomy; allows for diversity, accessibility and responsiveness
- Consensus building model
- Long-term regional planning capacity
- Fiscal equivalence and low costs

Regional District Disadvantages:

- Mandate too limited (Artibise, 1998)
- No consistent, forceful regional voice (Artibise, 1998)
- Difficulty making decisions; divisions created over "hot" issues
- Municipal self-interest can override regional needs
- Accountability issues (Smith and Stewart, 1998)

Voluntary Cooperation. Another option is voluntary cooperation. Municipalities can enter into voluntary cooperative agreements with other municipalities or establish a voluntary organization that goes beyond existing service agreements. This body can act as a forum for discussion and look at issues of common concern such as infrastructure and economic development. This type of agreement does not affect the current municipal structure or authority and members join voluntarily. The Alberta Capital Region Alliance and the Calgary Regional Partnership are examples of organizations formed for voluntary cooperation.

Regional Networks. A formalized regional governance network can establish a process for identifying and deliberating avenues for regional or inter-municipal cooperation. Networks are typically less rigid than other models of regional governance and more defined than ad hoc cooperative arrangements. Although several municipalities may form a regional governance network, private groups, public agencies, community associations, or academic centres can also start them. Networks often identify regional issues, provide inventories of available resources and mechanisms for addressing issues, and develop, lobby and carry out plans for regional cooperation through forums, workshops and public hearings. A number of regional networks are found in U.S. metropolitan areas. Formal regional networks are found in Erie County, New York, Charlotte, North Carolina, and Chattanooga, Tennessee. These are citizen-led networks that develop governance strategies and foster cooperation within the larger region (The Governance Project, 1996).

Service Specific Options

Service Commissions, Boards, Agencies, and Special Purpose Bodies. Most metropolitan areas have a number of single function service commissions, boards, agencies or special purpose bodies that have legislative authority and are directed by the province to administer and deliver services to member municipalities. These are basically area-wide special purpose authorities, each having its own relationship with local government authorities. Examples include transit authorities, water districts, libraries, parking authorities, and arts councils. Municipalities transfer funds to cover delivery costs and the special purpose body has the authority to make decisions about service delivery. Typically municipalities define the particular service needs and control service standards. Collectively the various special purpose bodies provide many services at a regional scale.

Special Purpose Bodies Advantages:

- Geographic flexibility, i.e., flexible boundaries
- Politically acceptable
- Diversity - can accommodate all types of services

Special Purpose Bodies Disadvantages:

- Increased fragmentation of local government
- Can hinder coordination of service delivery and policy development

- Lack of public accountability

Inter-Municipal Service Agreement. One of the tools used by municipalities is the inter-municipal service agreement. Inter-municipal service agreements are binding agreements or joint ventures among local governments and public and private agencies that include a variety of contracts and arrangements for service delivery and joint regional planning (e.g., shared road equipment, water treatment services). These agreements usually cover only one function or a set of closely related ones. Inter-municipal agreements represent a form of regional or sub-regional cooperation, for instance setting up a regional joint agency to supply services to several municipalities.

Inter-municipal Service Agreement Advantages:

- Flexibility
- Easy to attain, can be relatively simple
- Combine well with other government and governance options
- Mechanism for municipalities to develop relationships (Tindal and Tindal, 2000)

Inter-Municipal Service Agreement Disadvantages:

- Proliferation of agreements can be ad hoc, unsystematic
- Typically limited to hard service delivery
- Not a strong mechanism for dealing with regional issues (e.g., growth)

Regional Partnerships. Regional partnerships can be established voluntarily through a binding agreement among several member municipalities. These partnerships enable several municipalities to cooperate and share resources to achieve specified shared goals. A regional partnership includes a formal agreement that may specify cost sharing arrangements and establish a process by which decisions will be made. Examples of this model include the establishment of regional airport authorities and economic partnerships (e.g., Central Alberta Economic Partnership, West Central Economic Region).

Privatization and Non-Profitization. These options involve reassigning responsibility for a service delivery function to the private or non-profit sector. If non-profit and private organizations perform their functions regionally as opposed to within a delimited municipality, contracts with these agencies represent another regional option. For example, when several municipalities contract with the same private garbage collection agency, in effect the service has been regionalized.

There are numerous innovative examples of privatization and non-profit partnerships with municipalities. Tindal and Tindal (2000) note that use of the private sector was a cost-effective approach to transportation problems in Edmonton and Winnipeg when they began contracting with private taxi and van companies for transportation for the disabled.

Private/Non-profit Advantages:

- Allows government to increase focus on efficiency and effectiveness
- In some cases, can reduce costs; reduces need for up-front capital
- Use private and non-profit sector skills and experience to minimize costs

Private/Non-profit Disadvantages:

- Potential loss of control over specific service
- In some cases, can be more expensive (Sclar, 2000)
- Potential for widespread privatization of government services
- Risk that contracting agency will fail

Assessing Regional Coordination in the West: Key Questions

There is no tried and tested model that is ideal for all city-regions. Each of the local government and governance arrangements examined have both advantages and disadvantages and the weight attributed to each depends on where local and provincial government priorities lie and on the value placed on scholarly research and evidence.

This overview of regional coordination models provides an important background for assessing regional coordination in western Canada. The remainder of this research will address the following key questions:

What is the current status of regional governance in western Canada's major cities? Which cities are moving toward regional governance structures? What form is this governance taking?

What are the key pressures for and barriers to increased regional and inter-municipal cooperation in western Canada?

What are the necessary strategies and options for First Nations participation in regional governance? What are the barriers?

What are the best practices in regional cooperation?

To answer these questions, the Canada West Foundation conducted an extensive review of related regional governance literature, urban aboriginal self-government literature, and provincial and city specific municipal governance reports and reviews, and communicated directly with leading researchers in the academic and government communities. As well, information was obtained from confidential in-depth qualitative interviews with key civic officials and others involved in municipal government in each of the seven CMAs (e.g., urban officials, municipal associations, researchers and provincial officials). Snowball sampling was used to expand the range of key informants. In total 34 individuals with experience in municipal-regional issues and priorities or municipal-Aboriginal relations were interviewed for this study. Interview questions varied and were tailored to suit each key informant's particular circumstances and experience.

REGIONAL GOVERNANCE IN THE WEST

The seven city-regions in western Canada vary considerably in size and form, and it is therefore not surprising that they display a wide range of regional governance practices. The focus of this section is on how these large city-regions are managing their regional environment, the extent to which they are interacting with their municipal neighbours, and how they are structuring these relationships. This section does not catalogue or inventory specific inter-municipal agreements or other regional cooperative arrangements between municipalities, but instead provides a general sense of the current situation regarding regional efforts underway in each province.

Manitoba

In 1902 a general act established cities, towns, villages, and rural municipalities as the basic unit of local government in Manitoba, with the City of Winnipeg given its own special charter. This system remains in place, except for changes to the structure of government for the Winnipeg city-region.

The City of Winnipeg is the core of the Capital Region and contains over half the province's population. Winnipeg has a comprehensive single-tier local government system, known as "Unicity," that came into effect in 1972. Although the amalgamated Unicity is often referred to as a stable and coherent local government system, critics have argued that it has resulted in urban deterioration, due to both a lack of local resources and responsibilities, and poor inner city representation, which has allowed suburban interests to dominate.

Since 1972 there has been a population shift from Unicity to the surrounding municipalities, creating a new fragmented Capital Region. Winnipeg has experienced slow and uneven growth and a declining tax base, while most of the other municipalities in the Capital Region have experienced some growth and tax base increases. This has created problems in Winnipeg as its population of homeless, disadvantaged and unemployed continues to increase, resulting in social inequities between the city and the surrounding region. In 1989 the Manitoba government established the Capital Region Committee (a discussion forum or loose coalition comprised of provincial representatives and mayors and reeves of the Capital Region municipalities) to discuss these types of issues and to recommend ways to promote better planning and coordination in the region. The intent is to establish a charter of understanding to guide regional development, establish how to market the region, share the benefits of economic development, and establish areas for cooperation and action plans in land use planning and development, provision and sharing of services, environmental stewardship, economic development and intergovernmental relations.

In 1998 the Manitoba government announced the creation of an independent Capital Region Review Panel, which launched a review of the effectiveness of existing legislation and policies guiding land-use planning, development, and service delivery in the Capital Region. Its mandate was to make recommendations to facilitate better cooperation and a more coordinated approach in land use planning and service delivery in the Capital Region. The Panel's 1999 Final Report recommended enacting a statute (the Regional Associations Act) that would allow municipalities to join together in the form of voluntary Regional Associations (regional partnership system) to solve problems. Regional Associations would have the authority to act independently from the provincial government. A flexible framework was recommended to accommodate the evolution of Regional Associations as forums for discussion and promotion to future providers of planning and services.

The Government of Manitoba did not implement these recommendations. Instead, in 2001 Manitoba Intergovernmental Affairs announced a new planning framework called *Planning Manitoba's Capital Region: Next Steps*. The report states that the province will take the lead in developing a policy plan to address land use and growth management within the Capital Region. The Province also plans to: appoint a Regional Planning Advisory Committee, dedicate a professional planning staff, begin a review process to enhance the provincial land use policies, review the statutes governing planning in order to streamline legislation, and develop a common database on topics and issues related to the Capital Region.

Although the Capital Region Committee continues to meet to discuss regional issues, respondents stated that because the City of Winnipeg contains approximately 90% of the city-region population, it tends to dominate the region and as a result interaction with neighbouring municipalities is minimal. Also, Winnipeg's special charter (City of Winnipeg Act) creates wariness on the part of other municipalities over interaction with Winnipeg. However, bilateral service agreements do exist. Cooperation also exists in the area of land use development planning. Although the provincial government has chosen not to force inter-municipal or regional cooperation, respondents felt that continuing voluntary arrangements between municipalities would be viewed favourably.

Saskatchewan

Large-scale amalgamations found in other provinces have not occurred in Saskatchewan, and historically the Province has avoided any form of imposed municipal reorganization. As urban centres grew they were normally able to annex land for urban development, since rural municipalities did not usually approve of suburban fringe development within their own boundaries (O'Brien, 1993). Regina and Saskatoon are both single-tier cities whose jurisdictions cover most of their census metropolitan areas. Inter-municipal agreements are

common in Saskatchewan for services such as fire protection, road maintenance, economic development and planning.

In 1991 a symposium on *Financing Local Governments and Economic Development in the Year 2000* found that if greater regional and inter-municipal cooperation did not occur, services would continue to suffer from under-funding. The provincial government also investigated and assessed the pattern of inter-municipal arrangements in rural areas. In 1996 the provincial government introduced legislation to provide for service district boards modeled on the regional districts in British Columbia and regional service commissions in Alberta. However, municipal organizations rejected the proposal and the government retreated. Although regional governance and regional government systems do not exist, there is extensive regionalization in the province, including libraries, health boards, schools, area transportation, regional tourism boards, and regional agriculture and development boards.

In 1998 the Task Force on Municipal Legislative Renewal was formed to conduct a review and make recommendations on the need for, and the nature of, municipal legislative renewal in Saskatchewan. Although an interim Task Force report initially recommended a major consolidation of local governments, the final Task Force reports (released October 2000) suggest establishing an enabling statutory framework for regional municipal governance that would supplement the existing statutory frameworks for local municipal government. The final reports emphasize the need for regional governance to improve the functioning of public services and to contribute to capacity building for social and economic development. The reports do not recommend any particular model or specific way that this could be achieved but do provide some building blocks for designing an appropriate model. The reports received mixed reviews from the various municipalities and municipal organizations in the province. Although the Province has not acted on most of the specific recommendations, it did revise its existing statutory framework to facilitate regionalization.

The *Municipal-Provincial Roundtable* and the *Northern Municipal Roundtable* were formed in 2000 as forums for constructive dialogue between the provincial government and the municipal sector. Although not decision-making bodies, the roundtables were meant to replace the various committees, task forces and other consultations already underway. The roundtables include members from the urban, rural and northern municipal associations, the Minister of Municipal Affairs, Culture and Housing, and in the north, the Minister of Northern Affairs.

The *Municipal-Provincial Roundtable* identified a number of financial and legislative impediments to voluntary municipal restructuring in Saskatchewan, and proposed examining the functional roles and responsibilities of Saskatchewan urban municipalities. In 2001, the Province passed legislation designed to remove impediments to voluntary municipal restructuring, as recommended by the *Municipal-Provincial Roundtable*. One of the most notable statutory amendments allows municipalities to define the terms and conditions under which they could amalgamate.

In terms of municipal relationships within the larger city-regions, the City of Saskatoon has direct interaction only with the Rural Municipality of Corman Park and very limited interaction with the other five rural municipalities that comprise the CMA. The relationship between the Saskatoon and Corman Park local governments is described as being "very good, with extensive interaction." There are land development agreements in place, a provincial utility to supply Corman Park with water and many other formal service agreements. A one-mile buffer zone exists around the City, within which both the rural municipality and the City control the building development and zoning. The Saskatoon District Planning Commission and the Saskatoon Regional Economic Development Authority are key to helping create regional cooperation. The City of Saskatoon has

limited relationships with other rural municipalities because their populations are located farther away.

The City of Regina interacts with the surrounding Rural Municipality of Sherwood and as one respondent stated, "like many urban-rural interfaces it is a love-hate relationship." There are many formal areas of regional cooperation including the district planning process, work with the Regina Regional Economic Development Authority, regional fire protection services with rural municipalities under formal agreements, and other mutual aid agreements. The City also provides sewer and water services to industrial areas and provides user pay landfill services to the entire region. The municipal councils interact and have representation on the planning and economic development boards. The regional cooperation strategies that are in place have been effective, but there are some problem areas. Respondents stated that generally rural areas view the urban areas as imposing on them and a threat to financial resources. From the City's perspective, overall "we function quite well as an economic region."

Alberta

Alberta has 282 urban municipalities (cities, towns, villages and summer villages), 64 rural municipalities and four specialized municipalities. These municipalities cover almost half the land area of the province, and the urban municipalities are single or multiple single-tier models. The remaining lands are designated into seven improvement districts and three special areas (which are controlled by the Minister of Municipal Affairs) and 11 Métis settlements.

The metropolitan systems of Calgary and Edmonton have evolved quite differently. After Winnipeg, Calgary is Canada's most highly centralized single-tier CMA, while Edmonton's Capital Region continues to develop as a multiple single-tier local government system. Lightbody states that "cities are creatures of context" (1998: 4) and the historical development of each helps explain the differences in structure between Calgary and Edmonton. As a result of the oil discoveries in the 1940s, there was pressure to expand urban areas to accommodate industrial and residential demands. The City of Calgary used amalgamation and annexation policies in order to concentrate the industrial and commercial sectors within the city core; the City now has over 90% of the regional population within its boundaries. Edmonton pursued a decentralization strategy that saw competitive small satellite communities pop up around the city centre. Four cities and four rural municipalities ring Edmonton. This has meant that Edmonton has less than 75% of the regional population within the core city. In total there are a dozen autonomous local governments in the Edmonton area that have created inter-jurisdictional growth issues. In 1979, Edmonton requested a massive annexation of the City of St. Albert and the entire county of Strathcona. Although Edmonton did see an expansion in its area for development, it did not receive all of the additional land that it requested. For the past 20 years Edmonton has been involved in never-ending annexation and amalgamation battles with its surrounding municipalities.

Although regional planning commissions were initially mandated by the Province to prepare regional plans, they were abolished in 1994. Since that time there have been a number of initiatives to deal with broader regional issues, primarily in Edmonton. The Alberta Capital Region Forum was created in 1995 to develop a coherent regional economic strategy and examine regional land use planning. For a variety of reasons it was unsuccessful. It was replaced by the Alberta Capital Region Alliance (ACRA) in 1999. The ACRA is a voluntary association comprised of the City of Edmonton and 21 surrounding communities. The ACRA discusses and explores regional issues, shares information, advocates, provides research on regional issues, is a forum for stakeholders, and facilitates the implementation of regional initiatives. The top priorities for the ACRA include communication, transportation, economic development, municipal services and regional development.

The provincial government also initiated a formal review of municipal operations in Edmonton called the Alberta Capital Region Governance Review (ACRGR). The ACRGR was tasked with developing new approaches to the governance of the Capital Region including options for managing regional issues, options for the coordination and regional delivery of services, and ways that the provincial and municipal governments can work together to benefit the region. Two ACRGR reports released in 2000 recommended that regional governance be strengthened and formalized. Specifically, the Final Report recommended that a strong regional vision and regional partnership be established. As well, a regional partnership agreement should be created in order to address issues concerning the implementation of a regional partnership, including establishing a vision, determining membership, representation, voting mechanisms, roles and responsibilities, cost and revenue sharing arrangements, and accountability.

The ACRGR also found that there are two priority areas: the coordination of economic development activities, and the coordination of regional growth opportunities. Finally, several specific recommendations were made to improve the coordination of service delivery in the region. Although the Final Report has been forwarded to the provincial government, it has yet to have any of its recommendations implemented. At the same time, the Province, while considering a response to the review, continues to support the ACRA through a grant to conduct transportation and service studies that are consistent with some of the recommendations in ACRGR.

In terms of local cooperation, municipalities in the Edmonton city-region have extensive bilateral, multilateral, informal and formal processes with neighbouring municipalities. There are common sense relationships with commissions, boards and other special bodies (e.g., Capital Region Waste Commission) and a sharing climate exists within the region for mutual aid types of services, such as fire. Although the City of Edmonton and the provincial government have made a commitment to examine regional governance, there is some opposition from local municipalities to regional approaches and growth management.

The current climate regarding regional cooperation is one of "reserved interaction." Currently, regional planning and strategies are focused on specific plans, such as the regional transportation plan and the economic development regional plan. There are no solid strategies to advance regional cooperation and "everyone is waiting for the province to decide what to do." Formally, the ACRA meets to discuss regional issues and encourage broad regional benefits that can be achieved by working together. Although often noted as a slow process, one respondent felt that the ACRA is making progress, developing mechanisms to advance regional initiatives, and encouraging regional cooperation that is already occurring.

The City of Calgary is also officially in favour of working with its municipal neighbours instead of pursuing further annexation or amalgamation options. The City of Calgary has complex service agreements with neighbouring urban municipalities, including clear agreements and policies on sewer and water provision, fire protection and emergency services in the region. There are inter-municipal committees that deal with land use planning in the region. As well, informal activity between municipalities in the region takes place, but the extent of this type of activity is not known.

In 1999, under the provincial government's Regional Partnerships Initiative, the Calgary Regional Partnership was created so that Calgary and area jurisdictions could work together in a voluntary cooperative partnership on common issues in order to present a regional focus to residents, business and government. The provincial government provides Regional Partnership grants to support groups of municipalities that want to explore regional cooperation and collaboration. Calgary's regional partnership forum has created a positive cooperative philosophy among the 11 municipalities that

make up the region as well as the community of Redwood Meadows and observation involvement from Tsuu T'ina Nation. The partnership has allowed them to explore ways to cooperate in areas such as regional transportation, economic development, emergency services and environmental management. To this point, interaction has been consistently positive; however, the various projects that the partnership wishes to address, and the formalized cost sharing approach to these have yet to be implemented. The only apparent trouble spot is the lack of consistent interaction between the City of Calgary and First Nations in the region.

British Columbia

British Columbia's municipal government system includes cities, towns, villages and district municipalities. Over 80% of the provincial population lives in municipalities, covering less than one percent of the provincial land area (Bish and Clemens, 1999). British Columbia is unique in the West due to its regional district system. This system evolved in the 1960s in response to problems associated with the absence of a comprehensive municipal structure. These problems included challenges managing urban fringe issues, inabilities to gain economies of scale in service delivery, poor rural access to services, and the lack of an overall enabling statute to facilitate municipalities and rural areas to work together on regional service delivery. To address this, the Province created regional districts under the Municipal Act to administer certain functions over a larger area.

Currently there are 27 regional districts (initially 29 were created in 1965). Each district is governed by a regional board of directors comprised of mayors or councilors from incorporated municipalities within the district and directors elected from areas outside municipal boundaries. The regional districts vary significantly in size. The Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD) encompasses seven cities, eight urban municipal districts, three villages and three unincorporated areas. The Victoria Capital Region is comprised of two cities, two towns, eight urban municipal districts and four electoral areas (unincorporated areas).

Regional districts have three basic roles. First, they act as regional governments for a defined regional area and are therefore a vehicle for advancing the interests of the region as a whole. On a more practical level they are a vehicle for the delivery of regional services such as economic development, water supply, sewage disposal, and solid waste management. Second, regional districts provide a political and administrative framework for inter-municipal or sub-regional service delivery on a partnership basis, including services such as recreation centres and fire protection services. Any combination of municipalities and electoral areas can jointly decide to provide services and recover the costs from the beneficiaries. Third, in the absence of municipalities, regional districts are the local government for rural areas of the province (electoral areas). This means that the regional district provides community planning and land use regulation in rural areas and typically provides local services such as fire protection and nuisance regulation. They do not levy taxes, but instead send a requisition for the appropriate share of the service to each municipality. The structure of regional districts allows the jurisdictions to provide a full range of customized local services as desired by their municipalities or unincorporated areas.

In 1997, the provincial government, in conjunction with the Union of British Columbia Municipalities, made a commitment to reform the Municipal Act (renamed the Local Government Act). The objective was to enhance the level and flexibility of municipal governance powers while maintaining provisions for accountability and provincial involvement. The reforms included removing more than 50 requirements for provincial approval or supervision. The main reform, Bill 31-1998, provided for the recognition of local government as "an independent, responsible and accountable order of government" (British Columbia, 2001a). This Bill also defined the purpose of local government, the relationship with the provincial government, and articulated broader corporate powers for local governments.

As a result of the reviews there have also been some minor modifications to the functions of regional districts, but the overall governance system remains the same. For instance, while initially one of the primary functions of regional districts was regional planning, in 1983 they were stripped of their regional planning authority. The legislation governing districts was revised in 1989 so that the specific local services that fall under regional jurisdiction were listed in the statute. In 1995, the Province passed a Growth Strategies Act requiring municipalities to plan regionally. One of the most significant changes in regional district responsibility occurred when the GVRD took over responsibility for public transit from the Province in 1999. As well, a 1999 Regional District Review recommended several changes to regional district practice or legislation to improve their functioning. The recommendations focus on improving the ability of regional districts to adjust their own procedures in such areas as accountability, fringe area and municipal-electoral area issues, and dispute resolution.[3] All but one of the recommendations have been implemented.[4]

Although British Columbia uses a regional district model, it is not without flaws. For instance, it was pointed out that because the regional district board is comprised of elected representatives from each member municipality, there is actually very little "regional" thinking that occurs because they are too focused on gaining benefits for each individual municipality. As one respondent stated, "priorities will always remain with the constituents."

More specifically, the City of Vancouver has significant interaction and cooperation with the surrounding municipalities, largely due to the regional district system and the efforts of the Greater Vancouver Regional District. There are extensive bilateral and multilateral inter-municipal agreements in place (e.g., sewers, water, transportation), mutual aid agreements, sub-regional joint service agreements, as well as informal interactions on issues such as new cultural initiatives. One of the goals of a regional district system is to enable municipalities to create inter-municipal cooperation without enabling legislation and bring regional functions together under one entity. Cooperative arrangements do not exist, however, in the area of regional economic development. Competition among the municipalities for development opportunities and their inability to cooperate in this particular area contributed to the dissolution of the Greater Vancouver Economic Partnership, which had a region-wide mandate. Currently economic development is handled in isolation by individual municipalities. In the short-term there is no regional economic development; however, a provincially led initiative may result in a new coalition.

The municipalities that form the Victoria city-region cooperate, but to varying degrees and on different levels. Many of the smaller, more rural municipalities have totally different issues from the urban municipalities. Like Vancouver, the municipalities comprising the Victoria city-region tend to cooperate through the regional district vehicle on the following issues: arts and culture, social programs, community services, regional development and planning, regional growth management, and regional parks planning. There are very few inter-municipal service agreements between individual municipalities that occur outside of the Capital Region District structure. According to one respondent, many municipalities view the regional district as interfering in their local governance. In the Capital Region there is no general agreement regarding issues of regional growth management and planning, partly because the municipalities feel that they should have greater autonomy to control growth and planning in their own municipality.

A new initiative may bring back regional economic development to the capital region. A lack of commitment from the municipalities in the region saw the dissolution of the original economic development commission. However, with support from the federal government and the Capital Region District, a Regional Economic Enterprise Partnership has been formed; it involves the

major businesses in the region (e.g., Chamber of Commerce, VIATEC, Real Estate Board, Airport Authority, etc.) who believe that by working together they can benefit the entire region. This group is developing an action plan to create employment and opportunity for the whole region. The challenge is that there is no current commitment from the municipalities themselves to implement the plan. Overall, the provincial government has been unsuccessful in creating strategies for regional economic development in the province.

THE STATUS OF REGIONAL COOPERATION: STRATEGIES AND BARRIERS

Given that regional cooperation is broadly considered to be a positive strategy for municipalities to pursue, a question naturally arises: why is cooperation limited? This section will outline some of the key pressures for and barriers to increased regional and inter-municipal cooperation in seven western CMAs.

Although the regional governance literature provided a starting point to identify the key pressures for and barriers to increased cooperation, information was obtained primarily from the qualitative interviews conducted with municipal and provincial officials and other individuals involved in municipal government or regional issues. The interviews explored the current relationships among the municipalities in the city-region, pressures driving regional cooperation efforts, and the challenges municipal governments face when implementing regional cooperation strategies.

Key Pressures for Regional Cooperation

Respondents were emphatic that there is a clear need for even greater regional cooperation and integration, and described a number of key pressures on each core city to broaden its relationship with the surrounding region. Some of the pressures are related to broad trends affecting city-regions, while others are more specific to the circumstances in each province. Pressures include:

Connect to global markets. As new technologies have created a borderless world for many types of businesses, the importance of the global marketplace is apparent. City-regions are looking at ways to improve their global position and create a strong regional identity to compete on the global stage. By cooperating as one region, municipalities should be able to respond competitively.

Increase political power. Some respondents felt that there is greater strength in cities when all parts of the region work together and thereby increase their lobbying power with the provincial government. There are internal pressures to think in new ways to build stronger city-regions, thus necessitating more cooperative relationships with other municipalities.

Create economic development opportunities. From an economic development perspective, businesses are indifferent to political boundaries. Therefore in order for city-regions to compete globally, the regional approach is very important. The western city-regions all felt pressures for economic development to benefit their municipalities. One respondent stated that in order to attract investors, resources must be coordinated because investors look at regional infrastructure.

Manage development to obtain mutual benefits. Pressures also relate to the rewards that can be found through better management of development within a city-region. Some municipalities felt that the pace of development needs to be coordinated and growth kept at a sustainable level. For example, one respondent stated that a cooperative process is necessary to manage, in a coordinated fashion, decisions regarding sprawl around Winnipeg. As commercial and industrial growth occurs in city-regions, more pressures are placed on the various municipal governments to provide urban services, thereby creating pressures to broaden relationships with other municipal governments in the region. Many of the issues are "big picture" (e.g., transportation planning, environmental planning) and all municipalities in the region must have a voice.

Reduce fiscal pressures and find cost savings. Urban municipalities are currently trying to deal with increasing social and infrastructure costs. Demographic pressures are also placing increased burdens on urban areas. For example, in Regina and Saskatoon out-migration, an aging population, a diminished work force and shrinking tax base combine to create very strong fiscal pressures. How can sustainable urban areas be maintained? In terms of gaining efficiencies, some local services may generate savings if delivered on a regional scale.

Recognize provincial government influence or pressure. Provincial governments have exerted some degree of pressure on municipalities regarding inter-municipal and regional cooperation efforts. In British Columbia, the provincial government provided matching funding for regional growth strategies as an incentive to promote more cooperation within the regional district system. In Alberta, respondents reported that the provincial government encourages positive relationships between municipalities, is expanding resources to ensure cooperation, and has launched the regional partnerships initiative that provides support to groups of municipalities to implement partnerships with their neighbours. Although the Government of Saskatchewan backed away from recommendations made by the Task Force on Municipal Legislative Renewal, it has removed impediments to voluntary amalgamations among municipalities and supports any voluntary cooperative efforts. Efforts are also underway by the Government of Manitoba to increase the degree of regional cooperation within the Winnipeg city-region.

Provincial governments may also face external pressures that are then directed at municipalities. For instance, in Manitoba recent concerns regarding water quality have resulted in pressures to examine the water supply systems in the province. Some pressure has been exerted on municipal governments to cooperate and create water-servicing agreements with neighbouring municipalities that may have water quality issues. Provincial pressures can also extend to increasing efficiencies and effectiveness in other services, decreasing costs and reducing duplication of services.

Key Barriers to Increasing Regional Cooperation

Although there are different systems of municipal government structure and unique relationships that each of the municipal governments examined has with their surrounding region, there are still many challenges or barriers to cooperation that are common among all seven city-regions. Respondents identified the following barriers to increasing regional cooperation:

Lack of financial resources. A strong economy does not mean that municipalities have the resources or infrastructure to create regional opportunities. As long as municipal governments have to rely on a revenue base that is derived primarily from property taxes, they will not realize the benefits of a strong economy and will continue to place the needs of their own locality over that of the larger region.

Political roadblocks. Although efficiencies can often be gained by providing a service regionally, there can be roadblocks to automatically doing so. As one respondent pointed out, the politics of integrating services that make redundant employee positions calls for difficult decisions that some municipal governments may not be willing to make.

Lack of regional mindset. Another key barrier discussed was the nature of boundaries. A municipal boundary is an imaginary political construct that is used for, among other things, organizing government, data collection, and delineating service areas. A city-region is a concentrated urban area and its immediate hinterland, and it is viewed as immaterial where the "line" is placed, since the city-region boundaries can be fluid and flexible. However, there is lack of adherence or identification with a larger region and instead, greater emphasis is placed on where municipal boundary lines are drawn. Due to a lack of a regional mindset the municipal "boundaries become walls at the elected level."

Inequality among municipalities. There is a perception of inequality among the municipalities that form a city-region. How can a level playing field be established between municipal governments if their respective municipalities are vastly different in terms of territory and population? Smaller municipalities may be fearful of a larger municipality's dominance when discussing regional issues such as expansion and land-use practices. Decisions made at the local level may not easily fit with overall regional objectives. As well, perceived inequalities may occur if a consensus model is followed (e.g., if one municipality has a significantly larger portion of the regional population than the other municipalities, but has an equal voice or vote on regional matters). Inequality is perceived if the larger population's voice is deemed on equal terms on all issues with that of the small population.

Problematic past relations between municipalities. Negatively received past actions often stay in the minds of those municipalities involved and can create tensions among municipalities. For instance, Winnipeg's control over building and development once extended into the abutting municipalities. This is still a thorn in the side of other municipalities in the region.

Degree/lack of cooperation among municipal officials. The attitude of municipal officials within a city-region may affect the way that regional cooperation progresses. For instance, if a large municipality is dominant and is considered to have an "ego," this may be a barrier to getting along with other municipal governments. If, on the other hand, municipal governments are cooperating and bringing concerns forward to the provincial government, the provincial government can also perceive this in a negative manner ("getting too big for their britches"). Personality conflicts between municipal representatives can halt cooperative efforts before they even start. As one respondent noted, "Municipal in-fighting is another barrier."

Fear of new arrangements. Often regional cooperation will occur through new relationships, new governance models, or new government structures. The complexity of implementing any form of regional cooperation is considered a challenge. If voluntary mechanisms for increasing regional cooperation are chosen, perhaps only municipalities with similar views will cooperate. Another related barrier is fear of the type of regional government or governance arrangements that would be implemented or imposed. The status quo is seen as safe. As well, there is a strong fear that new arrangements will bring another layer of unnecessary bureaucracy. Opposition to proposed arrangements may shut down discussion of other options for creating regional interaction (as was the case in Saskatchewan). One respondent felt that the main barrier was the preoccupation with governance and institutional debates, instead of focusing on regional opportunities. A focus on structures means that the goal of improving function can be lost.

Potential loss of autonomy. Termed the "elephant and mouse scenario," respondents often stated that many of the smaller municipalities that make up a city-region feel that they will lose their autonomy and identity if they cooperate regionally with the larger municipalities. The perception is that a dominant municipality will gradually fold all municipal services under a regional umbrella that it controls, and the next logical step for the smaller communities will be amalgamation or annexation. In this instance, protecting "municipal autonomy and municipal self-determination are paramount."

Perception of slow process. Some respondents felt that depending on the tools being used to facilitate regional cooperation, often the pace of change proceeds too slowly. For example, British Columbia's regional district model is a time consuming model because it works on consensus. The result is that it often can take a long time to create change in a region.

Failure to recognize benefits, lack of municipal understanding. Many respondents discussed the low level of willingness of municipalities to agree to support regional options and their inability to buy into long-term

benefits. For instance, in Vancouver it was felt that economic development should be pursued regionally, but competition, self-interest and short-term benefits negate combined efforts. "Why go regional when you want the fiscal benefits solely for your own municipality?" Regional cooperation can be a tough sell because municipalities want to see something tangible and often do not see the benefits of a large cooperative venture. A lack of understanding of the benefits of regional cooperation and regional economic development is a barrier to creating development and marketing opportunities for a city-region. Simply put, some municipalities are suspicious of regionalism and will not consciously commit to it.

Lack of public understanding. Respondents expressed concerns regarding the degree of public understanding of local government, and their acceptance of regional strategies. The public may negatively view changes to the system necessary to implement cooperative efforts. For example, the public in Saskatchewan "have not embraced regional cooperation and are instead frustrated by government's preoccupation with trying to figure out its own relationships, instead of delivering services." Despite years of public education efforts, several British Columbia respondents felt that overall the general pubic does not know what a regional district is or what it does. A lack of understanding creates a barrier when a regional strategy or option is presented but is not implemented because it is unpalatable to the residents of a municipality.

Mistrust of provincial agenda. Generally, there is a strong mistrust of provincial governments. One of the barriers to any type of regional cooperation effort that is recommended, planned or encouraged by a provincial government is the municipal suspicion of secret agendas and "imposition of Ontario type amalgamations."

Extent of provincial government involvement. There is a difference of opinion on the nature of provincial involvement. One respondent felt that the provincial government should not be directly involved in regional coordination efforts, since it cannot play the role of mediator and arbitrator at the same time. Also, provincial governments are perceived to interfere too much and provincial legislation is perceived to impede the creation of regional opportunities. Others feel that regional cooperation gets a low priority on the political agenda, especially when provincial efforts receive negative responses (e.g., Saskatchewan review).

Difficulty establishing relationships with First Nations. Respondents felt that one of the greatest barriers to achieving complete regional cooperation was the lack of interaction and communication with First Nations in the region. Viable strategies for involving First Nations in discussions of regional cooperation are absent in most city-regions. This is discussed more fully in the next section.

FIRST NATIONS: STRATEGIES FOR PARTICIPATION IN REGIONAL COOPERATION

Most of the western Canadian city-regions include First Nation reserves and governments within their geographic scope. This fact is significant for at least two reasons. First, numerous First Nation issues – including self-government negotiations, First Nation urban governance, urban reserves, and continuing land claims and treaty negotiations – can have significant impact upon the entire city-region. Second, the First Nations communities themselves are impacted by decision-making in the city-region. Despite these realities, most First Nation communities are not currently part of the decision-making process in their city-regions, and municipal governments are often excluded from discussions between senior (federal, provincial, territorial) governments and Aboriginal authorities (Federation of Canadian Municipalities, 2001).

First Nation communities are unique and distinct legal and constitutional entities within Canada. Municipal

governments, however, lack constitutional recognition and fall under the jurisdiction of the provincial governments. On a practical level, there are some similarities between First Nations and municipalities; both provide similar services to local residents and are local governing authorities (Tennant, 2001). However, because municipalities are "creatures" of the provincial government they differ greatly in terms of power and autonomy from the self-government models that are being pursued by First Nations.

It was noted that First Nation issues could have important impacts on a city-region. As self-government continues to evolve, municipalities will be affected simply because self-government will be carried out at the local level. It will concern or affect areas adjacent to or within municipal boundaries; potential issues include service standards, development priorities, regulatory standards, and potential changes to the municipal tax base. As well, municipalities may be required to supply unique services to particular groups and this may affect municipal finance and administration (Federation of Canadian Municipalities, 2001). Changes to ownership of land and the creation of urban reserves would produce the need for, at least, a practical relationship between municipal governments and First Nations.

According to Barron and Garcea (1999), there are extensive relationships between First Nations and municipalities in Canada. Many large metropolitan areas in Canada have formal First Nation reserves either within or adjacent to their boundaries and/or service agreements or other service delivery arrangements with nearby reserves. In some cases municipal–First Nation relationships are the result of urban sprawl, whereby a city or town increases in size to the point where it abuts or encircles a reserve. In other cases, land claims result in First Nations purchasing or being granted lands either within or adjacent to municipalities (Barron and Garcea, 1999). In general, municipal–First Nation relationships relate directly to voluntary service agreements or cooperative arrangements, usually with the municipality providing a service (e.g., water, sewer, garbage collection) to the First Nation. Most of the arrangements are covered by formal agreements and can vary in scope and complexity, although some may be based on unwritten agreements. Adams (1999) notes that some agreements may include conditions related to land use and development. Although municipal–First Nation relationships are primarily based in practical cooperative arrangements, such as service delivery agreements, the relationship can also include joint meetings, First Nation representation on boards or committees, and joint economic development initiatives.

The subsequent discussion seeks to assess the importance of engaging First Nation communities in regional governance, identify barriers to such engagement, and begin discussion of the options for improving First Nations participation in regional governance in the years ahead. The research is informed by qualitative interviews with regional governance practitioners and experts on First Nation–municipal relations. Key informants for each First Nation community affected by regional cooperation in the seven western Canadian metro areas were repeatedly invited to participate in this research process. Unfortunately, due to the combined difficulty of contacting potential participants and a poor response rate to the research request, no First Nation interviews were conducted. As a result, the following section is based solely on the qualitative interviews with non-Aboriginal practitioners and experts, and on the academic literature. Therefore, despite our best efforts, the following discussion represents only one half of the First Nation–municipal relationship. It is hoped that subsequent research efforts will have greater success in incorporating First Nation perspectives on regional governance issues.

First Nations Participation

The following will provide a brief overview of the current state of municipal–First Nation relations and the degree of cooperation with the seven western CMAs, focusing on those First Nations with a formal government structure

located either within or adjacent to the seven large western city-regions. It is important to clarify that although the First Nations and municipal governments have established usually ad hoc, inter-municipal relationships, First Nations are not currently directly involved in any regional cooperation initiatives.

Manitoba

In 1997 the federal government, provincial government, and 19 Manitoba First Nations signed the Manitoba Treaty Land Entitlement Framework Agreement. Under the Framework Agreement, land will be transferred to these First Nations' reserves to make up for a shortfall that occurred when they were originally created. As well, the federal government provided monies to six First Nations from the southern part of the province (where surplus Crown land is unavailable) for the purchase of land from private owners. Although these First Nations are placing their priorities on acquiring Crown land, they have expressed interest in purchasing property in Winnipeg and other urban municipalities. The Department of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs and Departments of Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice have established a framework and guidelines to facilitate the selection and acquisition of lands within municipal boundaries. All of the land purchases from private landowners will be done on a willing seller/willing buyer basis. Different forms of urban reserves are now being explored and developed in the province.

Winnipeg and the surrounding region do not have any First Nations communities within their immediate vicinity. The City's interaction with First Nations is limited to issues concerning the urban Aboriginal population. In the province, there are very few reserves that are immediately adjacent to urban centres. Municipal and provincial officials indicated that service agreements between municipal governments and First Nations communities are not common; an example of a strong municipal–First Nation relationship is the City of Thompson and the Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation. The Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation had previously purchased property in Thompson on which they built a hotel and are now trying to obtain reserve status for that property under the federal government's Additions to Reserves policy. The negotiations between the City of Thompson and the First Nation are similar to the ones that took place in Saskatoon, discussed next.

Saskatchewan

In Saskatchewan there are significant relationships between First Nations and municipal governments, partly due to the Saskatchewan Treaty Land Entitlement Framework Agreement that was signed by the provincial and federal governments and 25 Saskatchewan First Nations in 1992. Under this agreement First Nations received funding to purchase land anywhere in the province to fulfill treaty requirements; in many cases the land acquired has been in urban municipalities and designated an urban reserve. In Saskatchewan 17 urban reserves have been created over the last ten years. Although these urban reserves have a legal and corporate status that is distinct from the municipality that encircles them, they do not have separate status from their parent reserve, typically located in rural areas. Saskatchewan is unique because First Nations deliberately choose urban areas for additions to their reserves as part of a long-term development strategy, and because municipal governments have played a significant role in these initiatives (Barron and Garcea, 1999). New urban reserves are preceded by local government and First Nations negotiations (Dust, 1995). One of the objectives of the Framework Agreement is to establish good working relationships between a municipality and the First Nation wanting to purchase property. Negotiations between municipal governments and First Nations have resulted in written agreements on issues such as tax loss compensation, sale of municipal services, bylaw compatibility and dispute resolution (Barron and Garcea, 1999; Dust, 1995).

There are currently many urban reserves located within cities, towns and villages in the central and southern portions of the province. Much of the property has been

purchased for commercial development. The Muskeg Lake First Nation urban reserve is located within the City of Saskatoon and has extensive servicing agreements that were negotiated prior to the creation of the reserve. As a result, the City of Saskatoon has an established and comprehensive working relationship with the Muskeg Lake First Nation. According to Barron and Garcea (1999), the City was supportive of the reserve creation process, despite some initial concerns regarding issues of jurisdictional authority and potential changes to the financial base. However, discussions took place regarding any potential conflicts over proposed use of the property, and the reserve must still comply with all provincial laws and municipal bylaws. The relationship is formal; the City provides the urban reserve with a full compliment of municipal services and is paid the equivalent in taxes for the services to the property. In terms of continuing cooperation efforts, the next stage involves exploring and creating joint economic development opportunities.

Although the City of Regina has a large urban Aboriginal population, there are no First Nations reserves considered to be part of the city-region. There are, however, negotiations underway to create urban reserves in Regina.

Alberta

Alberta is involved in treaty land entitlement negotiations on a case-by-case basis; most of these are in the northern portion of the province, and away from major urban centres. Extensive service agreements and formal interaction between First Nations and local governments are not common in the province. However, over the past several years, the City of Calgary has established a good relationship with the Tsuu T'ina First Nation, which is immediately adjacent to the City. Basic service agreements are in place and include sewer, water, and fire protection services. Tsuu T'ina has had an agreement in place with the City since 1992 to cooperate on the development of property and servicing. Although Tsuu T'ina has not directly participated in the Calgary Regional Partnership, it remains a member. There are currently other issues confronting the City and Tsuu T'ina that require resolution before the regional partnership becomes a priority. These efforts are now in question because they were dependent on the positive relationship that was built between the Chief and the Mayor, both of whom are leaving their current positions.

The City of Edmonton has very little interaction with the Enoch Cree Nation that is located within the city-region, and the Alexander Nation that is located on the outskirts of the city-region.

British Columbia

British Columbia is unique in the West due to ongoing treaty negotiations. Since no land surrender treaties were made in British Columbia, most of the land claims are comprehensive claims that involve a First Nation asserting Aboriginal rights and title to land. Municipal governments form part of the provincial negotiating team, and officially play an advisory role in treaty negotiations. Although treaty negotiations have stalled cooperative efforts between First Nations and municipal governments in some parts of the province, there are many reserves in British Columbia that were established prior to urban settlements growing up around them and as a result there are extensive formal arrangements between First Nations and municipal governments. As well, Bill 64, the Indian Self-Government Enabling Act (passed in 1991), gave First Nations the options to be the exclusive taxing authority on reserve lands and/or to enter into negotiations with municipalities for the purchase of local services.[5] As a result, in some areas there is extensive cooperation and the arrangement of service agreements between First Nations and municipalities. However, these relationships do not generally extend to regional issues.

There are five lower mainland area First Nations within the Greater Vancouver Regional District: Katzie First Nation, Musqueam First Nation, Squamish Nation, Tsawwassen First Nation, and Tsleil-Waututh Nation. Although the City of Vancouver has specific service

agreements (water, sewage, garbage) with the Musqueam First Nation, they are not involved in any regional discussions or regional issues. The GVRD maintains the position that its members are municipalities in the region and therefore First Nations cannot be members. The GVRD does not have a great deal of contact with other First Nations in the region, except for representing the interests of the region on the Lower Mainland Treaty Advisory Committee. Because the GVRD is an amalgam of the municipalities that are members, these municipalities will decide how and if the regional district will deliver regional services to other entities, including First Nations.

Seven First Nations are found within the Capital Region District (Victoria city-region): Beecher Bay First Nation, Esquimalt First Nation, Pauquachin First Nation, Songhees First Nation, Sooke First Nation, Tsawout First Nation, and Tseycum First Nation. Three of these – Esquimalt First Nation, Songhees First Nation, and Tsawout First Nation – are located in close proximity to the City of Victoria. Esquimalt First Nation and Songhees First Nation have agreements with adjacent municipalities, and Tsawout First Nation has a full service contract with Central Saanich. In Victoria, interaction with First Nations occurs on an issue-by-issue basis. In other words, the City of Victoria and adjacent First Nations have no ongoing mechanisms or meaningful interaction regarding regional issues. Although there is no overarching policy guiding the relationship and no formal government-to-government arrangements, there are some service agreements in place.

Barriers to First Nation Participation

Do municipalities want to include First Nations in regional cooperation efforts? Do First Nations communities want to have more than bilateral service agreements with municipal governments? There is obviously great variation across the western provinces and between different locales. However, for most local governments servicing agreements are the main form of contact with band councils (Adams, 1999). Larger regional interests and concerns are not included. One respondent stated that although municipal–First Nation relations are a slow and frustrating process, there are long-term benefits available for both sides. Despite this, strategies at regional levels to include First Nations are lacking. Although it is not known what the First Nation perspective is on the importance of regional cooperation with neighbouring municipalities, most respondents felt that it was important to include First Nations in regional cooperation efforts. However, respondents expressed frustration over the numerous barriers to participation and were at a loss to explain how inclusion could be achieved. The barriers include:

Lack of understanding of decision-making processes. Respondents mentioned that both municipal leaders and First Nation leaders have not taken the time to understand each other's government system or how decisions are made. In order to develop a positive working relationship and establish service agreements, each side needs to understand the other's positions and procedures on issues such as zoning, planning, property taxes and economic activity. There are many municipal governments that have a positive working relationship with First Nations and there are others that have been unsuccessful in trying to establish a relationship. Practical aspects of a potential relationship become very important – are both sides willing to cooperate and what are the benefits for each side?

Cultural gap. Cultural differences and often a lack of respect for these differences have created an ongoing situation where it is difficult to foster participation and develop relationships between First Nation communities and municipalities. Other related barriers include systemic discrimination, racism, misperception and mistrust.

Perceived unequal political relationship. Put simply, respondents felt that because municipalities have no constitutional power and are under the authority of the provincial government, First Nations do not view local

governments as being on the same level or having the same validity as the federal or provincial governments. Due to the differing constitutional and legal points of view there is no incentive to work with neighbouring municipalities. First Nations reportedly do not want to be seen as "equal" to the municipalities because it is opposite to what they are trying to achieve with self-government. Dust (1999) reports that the most common question asked of the City of Saskatoon was, "How did you get the First Nation to sit down and talk to you?" One of the barriers may be that although First Nations may want to talk to municipal governments, they are fearful that the federal government will interpret this as a way to "downgrade their self-government aspirations, since [municipal governments] are so clearly nonentities in the federal scheme of things" (Dust, 1995: 57). At the same time, there is no comprehensive municipal perspective on First Nations and what the municipal role should be in establishing a relationship between First Nations and municipalities.

Lack of local government responsibility. Local governments are treated as third parties (not unlike special interest groups) because they do not have a role at constitutional talks. Municipal interests are usually represented in First Nation negotiations by provincial governments, although often this representation is felt by some to lack legitimacy or substance. The current approach absolves local governments from finding solutions to issues and places responsibility on the federal or provincial governments, who are blamed for not doing enough. Local government perception of the situation was also mentioned as part of the problem: some local governments believe that the only way that cooperation with First Nations can be achieved is if First Nations "act like" municipalities (treat municipal governments as equal and not as junior partners).

Local government concerns. Local governments have fears and concerns regarding the impact of land transfers and, in some instances, the creation of urban reserves. These include fears regarding jurisdictional authority, control over development, bylaw compatibility, and potential loss of property tax revenue (Adams, 1999).

Capacity to undertake regional initiatives. Some First Nations may be reluctant to tackle regional issues when their political leadership may already be addressing other demands on the Band's resources and time (e.g., self-government, social issues). These issues must be dealt with prior to tackling "abstract regional cooperation issues." Often a municipality will also have capacity issues and other local problems to resolve, making the municipal–First Nation relationship a lower priority.

Lack of clear incentives. In some cases, in order for a First Nation to become more involved in regional cooperation and take the relationship with a municipality beyond simple bilateral service agreements, there needs to be clear benefits and incentives. Economic development is one strategy that could create fiscal benefits for both sides and provide an incentive to create regional alliances.

Unresolved land claims. Concern was expressed that in the case of British Columbia, regional cooperation with First Nations cannot occur until land claim and jurisdictional issues are resolved.

Successful Strategies for First Nation Participation in Regional Issues

Across the four western provinces there are initiatives underway and innovations occurring that are bringing First Nations and municipal governments together. For instance, there is an experiment underway in British Columbia that involves including First Nations in the regional district process by inviting them to participate in and attend these meetings. Formal methods of consultation and ongoing communication have been developed in some communities such as Thompson, Manitoba and Kamloops, British Columbia. The development of urban reserves in Saskatchewan has paved the way to establishing positive business relationships with Aboriginal communities. However, very few examples are directly related to regional

cooperation, regional governance or concern larger regional issues. At this point, it appears that although there are a myriad of service agreements and arrangements in place between municipalities and First Nations, there remains plenty of room for improvement to these basic municipal–First Nation relationships.

Respondents noted some conditions that are necessary to create successful initiatives and foster a better relationship. These include:

- creating joint economic development strategies;
- encouraging municipal governments and First Nations to be forward-thinking in terms of accountability, management and leadership;
- increasing Aboriginal representation in municipal councils, commissions, and advisory boards;
- opening lines of communication and building knowledge, awareness, and understanding;
- creating and building practical and fair service arrangements;
- determining and promoting the benefits that can be achieved through a cooperative relationship; and
- continuing the current dialogue and efforts at engagement.

These suggestions are by no means inclusive. The biggest concern raised by respondents was *how* to implement some of the above options and *how* to involve First Nations in regional issues. A commitment to regional issues and regional cooperation are necessary on both sides. Unfortunately, until the federal and provincial governments and First Nations resolve land claims, treaties, and self-government issues, regional cooperation issues will continue to remain a low priority.

BEST PRACTICES

The many examples of regional collaboration and cooperation have often undergone extensive change and evolution. Experimentation, patience, flexibility and openness to change are required if regional cooperation is going to become rooted in a city-region. The research makes clear that there is no model or strategy that will magically just "work" for a community, and problems with undoubtedly occur.

There are several key factors that should be taken into account because they can influence the degree of success that a cooperative effort will achieve. Despite the fact that the approaches and objectives driving cooperation in each city-region are unique, there are best practices that should be explored and addressed while implementing cooperative ventures.

Strategic Factors

Create a shared vision. One of the first, but perhaps most important, steps is to create a shared vision for the future of a city-region, one that includes all representative interests (e.g., business, non-profit, government). It is vital that this includes non-governmental organizations that have often been neglected in visioning processes, and yet play a vital role in the composition of city-regions. Numerous attempts at regional cooperation have failed due to considerable opposition from suburban jurisdictions. The process of forming a vision is "integral to making a region real, making it a collective entity capable of creating and implementing policy choices" (Wallis, n.d.). Not only is buy-in created once a shared vision is established, but the regional interests will see the long-term benefits of regional cooperation.

Assess the capacity of a city-region. Complex, all encompassing, "let's change everything at once" strategic processes are often overwhelming for local governments. Instead, small demonstration initiatives based on what has worked in other jurisdictions should be undertaken and then improved upon as necessary. City-regions

should be allowed to experiment with different approaches and strategies, and not be required to reach immediate consensus on a particular strategy or model to be implemented. Since efforts at regional cooperation require that the municipal governments in a region be involved, efforts should focus on tasks that are least politically volatile. In most Canadian city-regions these often already occur in the form of inter-municipal service agreements. These existing efforts need to be pointed to as positive strategies and then expanded upon (e.g., sharing economic development revenues or sharing police services). By only undertaking what is manageable, municipalities in a city-region will be in a better position to allocate fiscal resources to a particular regional cooperative initiative.

Show tangible benefits and implement incentives. Achievable actions and quick victories are necessary to showcase the benefits of regional cooperative efforts, thus encouraging all partners to move forward on this type of initiative. Incentives can also be financial. Provincial governments often encourage cooperation (usually inter-municipal cooperation) through the use of incentive programs that provide one-time financial assistance for new and innovative municipal partnerships on projects and service delivery. Other financial incentives could include additional tax tools for financing initiatives involving cooperation and ongoing operating grants directed at regional cooperative efforts. Some survey respondents stated that fiscal incentives did not work particularly well, and instead other mechanisms should be used to encourage regional cooperation, including increasing the power of municipalities to enter into cooperative agreements in whatever form works best and with whomever they choose.

Develop long-term regional strategies. Although it is known that large city-regions have inter-municipal cooperative arrangements and that regional cooperation occurs in various forms and at various scales, long-term regional strategies need to be developed. City-regions with a long-term vision, solid strategies and goals for maintaining a sustainable region are better able to plan and recognize potential opportunities and benefits. Individual municipalities will understand and see where their municipality fits in with the regional strategy. A long-term strategy may also enable a city-region to plan, and devise ways to increase First Nations involvement in regional cooperation.

Turn a problem into a catalyst. In some cases, a crisis occurs that may force a city-region to focus on regional cooperation and strategies; examples include an environmental crisis (e.g., water quality issues have been brought front and centre as a result of events in Walkerton, Ontario), or in the case of Denver, Colorado a deep economic recession. A catalyst can also be linked to a single problem that need not be a crisis. For instance, increased commuting time may require a single-issue response, such as changing capacity in the region's transportation system. A broader regional strategy to deal with growth and development may not be supported in this case.

Obtain strong leadership. Individuals are key to building coalitions that cross organizational boundaries, mobilizing communities behind an agenda, and creating a viable strategy that people want to be a part of. Although difficult, it is necessary to have leaders committed to a regional agenda and willing to collaborate around shared issues. Leaders should be able to move municipalities beyond negative past circumstances and events.

Ensure citizen involvement. Effective leadership is only one part of the equation. Citizen participation is key to a successful metropolitan collaboration (Parzen, 1997). Citizens of a city-region need to understand and commit to a regional vision in order to keep regional leaders on track. Ensuring citizen involvement is one way to address the challenge of public understanding of local government issues.

Collaborate with public and private interests. Public and private interests have not been incorporated into broad regional discussions in Canadian city-regions to the

extent that they should. A recent trend in the United States places significant importance on the engagement of major private sector organizations and non-profit sectors in regional issues (Rothblatt and Sancton, 1998). Examples include economic development agencies or business consortiums. Not only will collaboration with the public and private sector increase understanding of regional concerns, but it may also open avenues for different types of partnerships.

Process Factors

Recognize the importance of process. Recent efforts at regional cooperation have placed greater emphasis on changing the process rather than the structure of local government. Although structural alternatives (amalgamations, formation of special purpose authorities) should not be immediately ruled out as a way to achieve regional objectives, the initial focus should be on visioning, strategic planning, resolving conflict and building consensus (Wallis, n.d.). Placing greater emphasis on new ways to create opportunities for a region that do not involve amalgamations or another layer of government will help to remove the challenge of implementing new arrangements.

Narrow the focus. Efforts at regional cooperation should begin with a narrow focus. For example, in Albany, New York, a special commission was established to institute a process by which municipalities can collaborate to regionalize services in the area. Only five areas, including economic development and transportation, were considered ready for regional cooperation (The Governance Project, 1996). The advantage of choosing a narrow focus for regional cooperation is that it is less threatening to citizens and elected representatives. Also, the narrow focus allows for greater efficiency, and can remove the perception that all regional efforts are slow and complex.

Find a way to implement and act on decisions. It is imperative that city-regions work toward the goal of establishing an effective decision-making mechanism. Chicago provides a good example of what not to do. Despite the fact that there are many regional planning institutions in the Chicago area, they have almost no authority to implement their plans. The main bodies involved, such as the private sector, the state government, and the regional planning institutions, are unable or unwilling to resolve issues and the result has been inaction.

When selecting a decision mechanism, local governments should be aware of each option's advantages and disadvantages. A consensus decision-making model is an option, but local governments should be aware that this model is extremely time consuming and difficult. For instance, it took three decades for the Boston Metropolitan Area Planning Council to reach a consensus on a comprehensive regional plan (Rothblatt and Sancton, 1998). One of the difficulties of a consensus model is that without unanimous agreement often nothing is achieved. As well, many voluntary partnerships spend a great deal of time discussing regional issues, but have no authority to implement any decisions. The point to stress is that local governments must carefully evaluate the various decision options.

Use a bottom-up approach. Regional governance in various forms has existed for over thirty years, yet we continue to have the same problems because so much of regional governance and regional government options have been directed from the top-down (i.e., provincial governments). Broad participation at the local level in the development of a region's long range plans is considered essential to make the plans synchronous to the needs of the region's businesses and communities. Provincial governments that support regional cooperation efforts should recognize that a bottom-up approach is a necessary condition for a successful initiative.

Create indicators of success. Positive regional initiatives have often made an effort to measure the impacts of their progress and current practices. Indicators can be benchmarked in order to decide on specific targets for a

region. By managing information, measuring progress, and where possible, comparing success to other areas, city-regions can make more informed and knowledgeable decisions.

Attitudinal Factors

Recognize that regional issues are sensitive. Discussions of changes to local governments and efforts for regional cooperation have become sensitive issues for many municipalities, due in part to some of the systems that have been implemented (regional governments, amalgamations) and the way that strategies to achieve coordination have been directed (top-down or forced). As well, there is often a difference of opinion on the best way to proceed. Simply recognizing that there is often fear and misperception surrounding any type of proposed arrangement means that sensitive issues (e.g., fear of losing autonomy) can be managed accordingly.

Expect and understand trade-offs. In the search for appropriate arrangements to achieve regional cooperation, all partners should be aware that there could be trade-offs. For example, attempts to be inclusive could result in a longer process, while attempts to achieve quick results could result in the exclusion of some partners. As well, there is a need to find positive win-win scenarios for any voluntary regional initiative. Municipalities are often only able to cooperate on issues where they do not perceive losses for themselves. Depending on the goals of a regional initiative, the municipalities involved may not all benefit in the same way at the same time. However, although a municipality may be overlooked in one instance, this does not mean that they will not receive opportunities at another time.

Accept local solutions. Research on regional collaboration and cooperation shows the diversity of approaches, methods, strategies, and issues that currently exist. Regional cooperative efforts should be unique and tailored to local circumstances. Bureaucratic blanket policies concerned with creating regional cooperation often do not fit the special needs of a particular municipality or city-region. If greater independence was given to local governments to implement and test local solutions without fear of repercussions and interference, a more positive and trusting municipal-provincial relationship could be established.

Recognize the value in academic studies. As noted at the start of this study, academic studies of different metropolitan arrangements provide evidence that is contrary to popular conventional thought on these arrangements. Research can be a valuable tool in determining what type of regional approach would be best, based on where a city-region places more value. By the same token, the experiences of municipal officials and practitioners in terms of what is effective and what works in day-to-day operations should also be taken into account.

CONCLUSION

In western Canada's city-regions, there is increasing awareness of the importance of regional cooperation. Although there have been great strides towards increased cooperation and collaboration in many areas, there remain numerous opportunities for enhancing cooperation over time.

The challenge for both municipal and provincial governments is to facilitate cooperation while avoiding inappropriate "top-down" approaches. Each city-region has its own particular circumstances, and the success of regional cooperation efforts depends upon the degree to which these circumstances are respected. Each city-region must decide its unique regional identity, vision and approach. Admittedly, this can be a long, difficult and complex process. However, cooperative efforts will only create stronger and more dynamic city-regions. Given the importance of cities to the Canadian economy and quality of life, this is a process that policymakers should encourage. ■

ENDNOTES

1. The main economic article is Tiebout's "A Pure Theory of Local Expenditures" (1956), and in political science, Ostrom, Tiebout, and Warren's "The Organization of Government in Metropolitan Regions: A Theoretical Inquiry (1961). There have been several recent contributions on the importance of public choice theory and local government: Oakerson's *Governing Local Public Economies: Creating the Civic Metropolis* (1999), and Stephens and Wikstrom's, *Metropolitan Government and Governance: Theoretical Perspectives, Empirical Analysis, and the Future* (2000). Bish (2001) comprehensively outlines the main contributions to public choice theory from both the economic and political science perspectives.

2. Influential advocates of the new regionalist approach include Peirce, Johnson and Hall (1993), Dodge (1996), Orfield

3. For a complete list of the twenty recommendations and a review of regional district roles and operation, please see Bish, 1999.

4. The only recommendation not pursued was the following: "That there be explicit recognition that First Nations can participate fully in custom servicing arrangements with the basis for payment and voting participation on the committee as agreed to in the agreement" (Bish, 1999). In other words, First Nations could sit on regional district committees and have delegated authority for decision-making. The provincial government felt that this type of arrangement was the responsibility of individual local governments and First Nations and that they would have to design their own contractual agreement if they desired this type of arrangement.

5. In 1988, Section 80 of the Indian Act (Canada) was amended to give First Nations the opportunity to create their own taxing authority on reserve lands. In 1991, the Government of British Columbia created the Indian Self-Government Enabling Act to help First Nations achieve self-taxation. Sixty-one bands currently have self-taxation on reserves. The band develops property assessment and taxation by-laws and contracts for local services, such as sewer and water, from the municipality. The province or municipality vacates the reserve as the taxation authority (British Columbia, 2001b). For more information regarding self-taxation and the municipal-First Nation relationship in British Columbia, please refer to Bish, 1996 and Kesselman, 2000.

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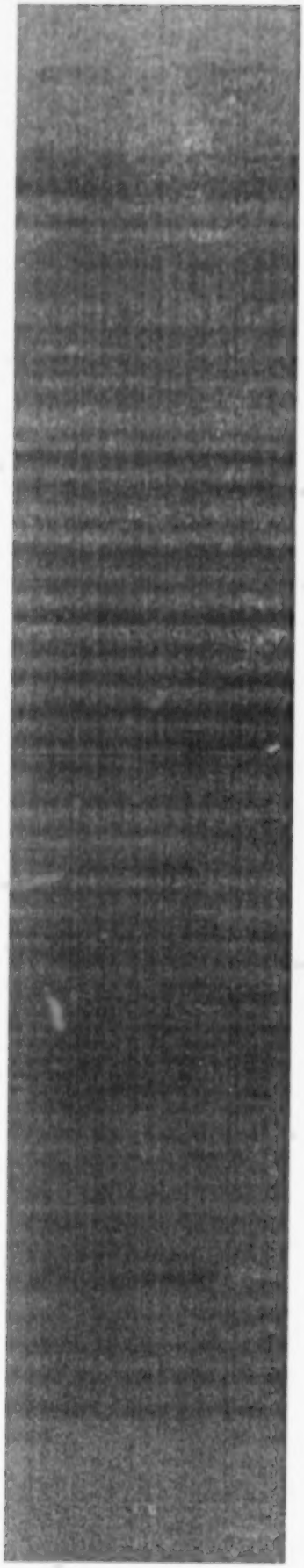

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